SIGNET
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MONTEREY

When I was six years old,
the high vaulted ceilings of the
cloisters
gloomed cool inside the sun
baked walls.
Marble, smoothe and blue-
veined like the skin of
gentle
        ladies
smooth and damp.
Stone floors, cobbled
rough with sand
scraped around at the
        edges.
Woven mats, green and brown
frayed ends,
hung in front of windows
set in thick walls like
rough amethysts
dug from the summer sky.
Old smells
of melted wax,
        polished brass
and dried fruit
mix new with oiled leather
sandals
scuffing

dusty padre
proud of his bright keys
shows us through oak,
iron studded doors.
It is cool in the
cloisters.
Perhaps we should
        stay.

Mary Crow

THE DANCER

Arrayed in pink and tied-up shoes
And tutu stuck erect with glue
Awaiting Bach who is her cue –

In swinging rhythm, pivoting charms
Then she lifts and parades her arms
Reminding me of old school-marms.

Like fairy's breath she whisks on by
In circles square, perfections die
Her heart pounds red, applauds this lie

By dancing slow she has more grace
Better than a quickened pace
(Remember that. you'll be an ace!)

Sue Sublett

ON THE TIP OF MY TONGUE

On the tip of my tongue
(where so many facts had been before)
To the valley which captures
Everything that enters
Seducing the taste buds and
Circling them with sweetness
Forcing one to forget the bitter.
Man, what a life-saver!

Carolyn Thomas

WIDE OPEN

Shock, freeze,
pierce, chap,
  needless;
Alone, without,
  forgotten;
He didn't even bother to close the door,

Carolyn Thomas

THE MORAVIAN CEMETERY

The cold, stone stars
Shone in the grass night.
Equality was the moon,
For all the stars were of the same magnitude
Immovable peace came at last
In the eternity of the silent, grassy night.

Carolyn Thomas

UNTITLED

You distant
somewhere upon your hill
under your own shade
I watch
nearer than you can see
holding back the dew drops
to dodge behind
When you distant
look out of your dreams
And see me

Noel Walker

THE RENEWAL

What was the blast that lighted the sky
with its pink and purple blue
and shook the earth from its slumber?
What was the song that opened ignorant ears
and muddled the minds of the wisest?
What was the odor that stopped the flowers
from growing
and kept the suds under the earth
until people became hungry again?

Robin Caldwell

TODAY, TONIGHT

Twigs and boughs
bow
together.
Transposition
of
night.

Orange flicker
Black.

Red f[l]a[m]e

Tumultuous tyrant
Heat,
licking the sky.
Blue
lungs
cursing a weary land.

Jane Ariail

UNTITLED I

I would very much like
To wake up one morning
And find that every god-damn
honkey on the face of
God's green earth had disappeared!

But if that happened,
The next time I fell
Flat on my face,
Trying to make an excuse
For myself
Who the hell would I blame?

Marcia Cooke

DILEMMA

You are an old sock that has
Developed a hole in the toe.
Shall I darn that spot or
Will you be content to sit in a drawer?

You are a china cup dropped
On the kitchen floor.
Shall I glue you back together or
Would you rather be thrown into the garbage pail?

You are a battered wooden shutter that
Finally falls from its hinges.
Shall I paint your boards or
Do you prefer to be used for kindling?

You are a lame chicken that
Hobbles around my farmyard.
Shall I bind your leg or
Would you rather be Sunday dinner?

Marcia Cooke

Furry voilins
breathe shrill octaves –
an in and out melancholy –
scampering up
and
down my spine.
A syrupy tongue licks "C" and "D"
over and over again,
making notes drool.
Black on brown
like rolling into a shag rug
whines rhythmically
like a wet nose.

Sue Sublett

HOUSE HUSBAND

I love you
Like I love this house
It is solid and secure
And I know all about it

How like this house you are
I think of that often
When I rearrange the furniture
Or when my bad mood
Is reflected in unwashed dishes
Unmade beds, unironed clothes

You're right
I wasn't like this at first
Then – I was me
But things didn't work out for me
So I tried being us
It's not my fault
I thought you understood
Because you said you love me.

Vicki Remishofsky

the minute hands
go around and
around
in their mechanical
stubborness
but how can you
measure time
except just by
living?
even if you stand still
and think
the hands continue to move

maybe it's like learning to tie your own
shoestring
you try and try and try – fumbling with the
strings which are seemingly fighting back
but you do learn
and then discover buckles.

Dee Thomas

THE NATURE OF THINGS

I am looking out of my window
Watching the little boys play with
Their basketball. There are three
Black boys wrestling over in the
Corner of the yard and five White
boys ignoring them.
I look out again and there are
Eight little boys chasing the ball.
There are three Black girls dancing in
The corner of the yard.
I look out again and there are
Eight little boys playing basketball and
Three little girls chasing them.
A teacher walks out of the
Building and there are five White boys playing
Basketball, three Black boys wrestling and
Three little Black girls dancing in the corner
of the yard.

Marcia Cooke

BETWEEN TWO AND THREE IN THE MORNING

There is a time that I reserve
Usually between two and three each morning
When I drag out all the sacred memories
I have hidden under my pillow during the day.

You stare at me from your frame on
the counter.
And I watch her face, wondering if
she ever really smiled that way at me.

Your face is somewhat shadowed because the
photographer attacked as you were leaving
the building, coming home to another
fatal attempt at macaroni and cheese.

On good days you would have had a
splendid feast, but in the summer,
after cursing the air conditioning, you
came home to me and a tall glass
of iced tea.

My attention is focused on the dried rose
buds I keep between your pictures,
separating you still from her. Ironic
That even now there is a barrier – simple
pink rosebuds.
At least now you can see the problem.

I reflect on the day we dragged
you out to go sight-seeing only
to marvel when you had as
much fun as we did.
Afterwards we came bursting in, the little
ones delighted and you and I
closer, having noticed
Your eyes as we stood at that memorial.
The Dutch Tower and Iwo Jima –
now I understand.

We take the long drive home.
You are reconciled to the fact that I
smoke and so I light all
your cigarettes for you. The
Radio is playing and you laugh
as I translate the song of
Maxwell and the Silver Hammer.
It is good to see that smile.

You are still smiling as we all
pile into the car behind you.
No one knows where we're headed
but you are smiling and we
all hunger for it.

It is summer – a strange, ragged,
uneven summer. The air conditioner
will not work and I move
the sofa closer to your room
to catch the air from the fan.
I am content to sleep outside
your door and you are amused
to have me there.

We go to visit her, but you will
not go in. I am angry
because you send me in alone
but I go because you ask it.
She has drifted between us and I
hate her but you cannot.
You explain things to me and I rebell.
I am angry and you, you are
just you but I cannot see you.

It is late, time to go home. You
drive away and I hang on
to the window singing my favorite
song . . . You cannot understand the
words so again I translate. I
marvel as you sing, as if you
had written the song. The

Announcer says "Alone, Again Naturally," and you
smile. Everyone has piled into
the car. They do not know when
you are leaving but you are smiling
and we all need your smile.

You are still smiling as I let the
screen door close behind me. You
never did like slamming doors.
We have argued that the chrysanthimums
are too big and the roses are not
the buds I ordered but you are
still smiling. Don't let it upset
You, people very seldom get things
Done right these days.

You are still smiling. Everyone is at home
dressing; they didn't miss me. I must
go soon but there are things I
need to know before you leave; things
I forgot to ask in September.
It's nearly three and I have to go but
you are still smiling. I understand.
I kiss your forehead and close
my eyes for fear the smile will vanish
but it is still there.

I must memorize that smile. You have left
us again to go to her, even if she
still doesn't know it. I knew it would
happen one day and so did you but
they all watched your smile and imagined
That we all had years together. We
were wrong but you knew.
I talked to you and you
could hear her calling you
and decided to leave us and
go to her. Even the distance
I put between the two of you
serves no purpose.

You are still smiling, and I know
you will understand why. It
was not vengence or hate; I had
gotten over that. It was because
you were smiling and we all
needed to see your smile.

I reflect on the pictures on the counter.
You are not smiling because the
photographer attacked as you left
the office, hurrying to a tall
glass of iced tea and me.
She is smiling and I know that it
is only because she has transcended
the rosebuds and the jagged gray
rocks of her private mountain and
is watching you smile.

It is past three, and I have remembered
too much. I fold the memories neatly
and push them back
Beneath my pillow. Illich wants
to know what I think of him
and it's late.

I turn out the lights and slide my
hand underneath my pillow.
You are still smiling. I can go to
sleep now and dream peacefully
until tomorrow between two
And three.

Marcia Cooke

UNTITLED

I'm leaving.
To hell with
Culture
And purple spangles.
Dogs bark.
A Peacock screams.
Rusted screen on a wooden frame.
Behind is
Grey hair.
A shrunken frame
Porcelain teeth.
Air
Heavy with
Grease bubbles.
Frying skin.
Loved.
White fingerprints on my cheeks.
Grit.
Between my teeth.

Elizabeth Gaskins

UNTITLED

Sitting in wonder
Your presence holds me
Death in peace
Would be in your arms
You laughed at all my defenses
And held me in undemanding warmth
One can't rest forever
True rest
So you flew
Laughing
Shimmering gold
Some were fun
Others hurt
You could be neither
But blue skies
And a burning sun
Are trinkets behind
Within
Without
For you

Beth Pate

UNTITLED

. . . and these buildings
seem
to become a part of me.
quietly and delicately weaving
into me.
breathing
a web of attachment and life
through me.
but at times
the pattern becomes too fitted,
pulling
the very breath from me.
and i in turn begin
to tear and pull
the gossamer
surrounding me,
each fiber snapping another
until ———
i am clinging
desperately
to the
last
thread . . .

Retta D'Albora

THE CHEERFUL GIVER

If I ever found a penny on the street,
I'd drop it in a beggar's cup.

If I ever found a nickle or a dime,
I'd do the same.

If I ever found a quarter on the street,
I'd buy two stamps and try to find someone
To write a letter to.

If I ever found a dollar,
I'd put it in my pocket and
Laugh at the beggar and the two people
Who got my letters.

Marcia Cooke

VISIT TO CARMEL

The office was

bright with children
black, white
old and young although all were thirteen

Constant jabber swarmed
here

there

and here again
until the room was groaning under a tunnel of noises.

Two voices tottered
above the

staccato
crack of typewriters
phone drones
the whish of doors:

a loud white voice and
a quieter black one.

The stocky blonde boy, saliva spewing,
bullied the slight brown boy
His index finger dug deeply
into the brown body;
like a fist, it punched the slight boy's breath away

— You fuckin' black boy, you don't have the sense God gave you!
— Either do you, whitie — everyone knows God don't make black boys no' mo'

The blue eyes squinted up
spitting no reply

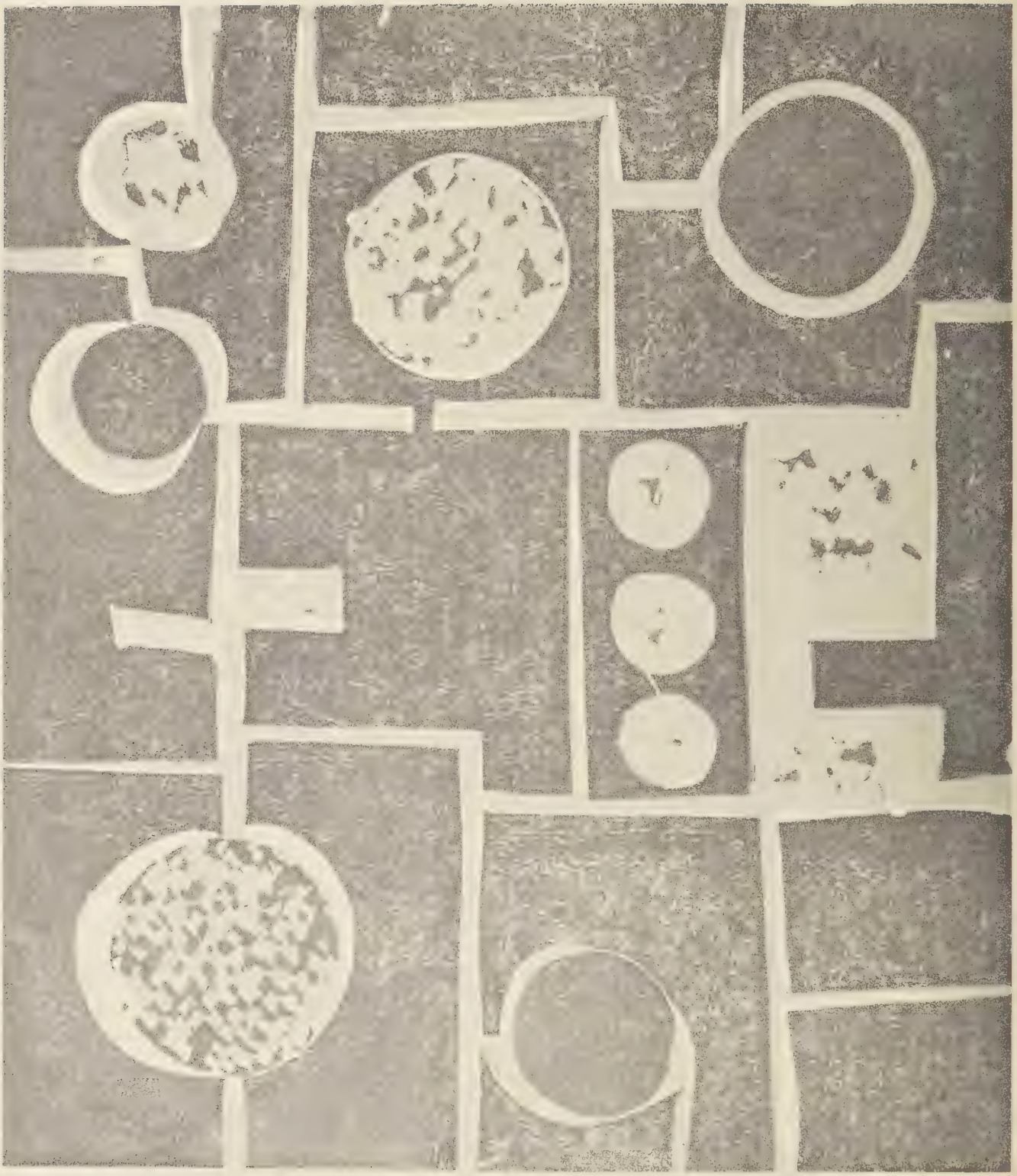
— ah, go to hell, blackie.

With sharp typing shooting him through the back
the blue eyes shot from the office
leaving the slight boy
slightly browner.

Sue Sublett

"Old Church"

Swan & Hunt



Kent Hart

"WHITE FEATHERS IN THE SNOW, THE GULF CLAIMS"

This skin is cold and tired
and shivers in its dryness.
It waits for the coming of a seasoned rain
to kindle other fires.

This skin draws up into its corners,
gathers in folds, anticipates a further stretching
    the further tearing of flesh from bone
    that is the essence of all mourning

This skin lies waiting,
lies thirsting in conception –
It's pores gaping – hungered souls –
it cries within the darkness of the body's slumber:

Obscure in sleep
Unyielding to the touch.
holding to a shapeless dream of youth
unspoiled and nurtured by approaching age.

Cynthia Anchors

FUTILITY I

When I sit in my room and
    look out on all the people
running around
    going absolutely nowhere, I wonder
    if anybody ever told them . . .
What? Anything. They do not realize
that only I can see where
they are headed – watching them from my window.

I wonder how many people have
    looked out of their windows and
watched me
    going absolutely nowhere, shaking
Their heads and feeling.

Marcia Cooke

UNTITLED

Marianna's mountain
folk sit rocking
        all day long they swing
their putty faces to the horsehide rhythm
and the lye-pot swing, chained to the fire.

Once, they pulled their shoes up
and stood
to see the coal dust clouds gathering;
"Progress is a 'comin' round the mountain"
The men bought new hats and there
        was a rush
at the dry-goods store,
        for pearly teeth.

They had a hey-dey,
        in mid-July.
Later the store had a hundred pair
of "once wore Sunday choppers".
God knows how Marianna made
        her money to buy
that gay red dress from the store window.

But it did its trick and tripped
the eye of the city high-hatter
who sauntered through town on Fridays.

She drove off in a high backed buggy,
sobbed that she wouldn't come back
'till she'd bought her mother
        a new wicker rocker.
That must have been two years back
        comes April.
Marianna's still away,
        and her mother says her old one
                rocks just fine.

Mary Crow

ASHES TO ASHES

Are you dust yet?
Or are you still a cold brown suit
enclosed in a gray casket
covered by a gray steel vault
splattered with a few feet of caky earth
ladden with lavender orchids and bloody roses
beaten down by the November wind
soaked by the mid-winter rain
finally deposited at the city dump?

Are you dust yet?
Or are you still smiling
enclosed in a gray casket
covered by a gray steel vault
splattered with a few feet of caky earth
ladden with lavender orchids and bloody roses
beaten down by the November wind
soaked by the mid-winter rain
finally deposited at the city dump?

Are you dust yet?
Or are you still my father
alive and breathing somewhere in my mind
tortured loose from reality
sitting, staring into space
holding what is left of military honor
almost deposited in foreign hands
finally in the grave next to yours?

Marcia Cooke

COMMENTARY

We all wonder around from
Day to day, both feet firmly
planted in the mud puddle of existence

Nobody seems at all surprised that
Sprite is clear and natural and
that the only thing with a lot to
give is Pepsi.

But we can't be too hard on
ourselves. We all took advantage
of singing in perfect harmony by
increasing the profits of the Coca Cola
Bottling Company.

In her infinite wisdom and variety,
America has become one giant returnable
soda bottle with one last swallow of
Dr. Pepper left to down.

Marcia Cooke

UNTITLED II

My birthday cake came in the mail today

three weeks and a day late

Crumbs were crumpling
within and without
the puckered
edges of
wrinkled
foil

Uncrinkling it, I inhaled
tasteless pink roses

which had

sunk

into
my name like a navel.

Sue Sublett

UNTITLED II

You sit there staring back.
Turn off that crooked smile!
Go back into the bottom drawer
Beneath my summer clothes.
That scarf still warm from your
touch and the blue blouse with
the button missing.

Shut up! I sit there listening
To you saying the same things
Over and over
Knowing it will come out the same.
Even in the silence I remember the day
we tried to sit without talking
and ended up laughing ourselves to tears.

You keep reminding me of all my faults.
All those terribly stupid things I
Resorted to because I wasn't sure of anything.
I want to burn your picture
but I can't because that would be
childish too, wouldn't it.
So instead I burn myself mentally each
day as I
Remember what you said
When you said
"Good-bye."

Marcia Cooke

ONE SUNDAY WHEN DADDY WAS HOME

It was Sunday morning and everybody else had gone to church. I knew Daddy believed in God but I guess he managed to find Him someplace besides church on Sunday morning. I never did understand that, Mama having always told me that Sunday was the Lord's day and the least we could do was go to church and thank Him for Monday thru Saturday. I always wondered why you didn't thank Him for Sunday too, but I guess it's because you couldn't count Sunday till Monday came around.

Anyway, we sat there, reading the newspaper and catching up on each other. We must have talked about most everything a person could possibly find to talk about and had just gotten going good when Mama and the children got home from worship. They didn't look any different to me on the outside so I told myself that the Lord must have worked on the inside that Sunday and was saving the outside for next Sunday.

We all went into the house to start fixing dinner. I usually just got in the way in the kitchen so Mama sent me into the bedroom to help the little ones get out of their Sunday clothes. She called to me to be sure and take those white anklets off or she'd never get them clean in the washer. I could hear Daddy saying something and then they both laughed. Then all of a sudden me and the little ones started laughing too. It didn't matter that we didn't know what was going on. Daddy was laughing and we had to laugh too. Besides, Mama said we should be good and make Daddy happy since he had to go back to Washington after dinner.

It was really funny the way everybody acted when Daddy was home. Usually on Sunday, I went to church but being the oldest I got to stay home and keep him company. Mama always said he stayed by himself too much although he didn't look very lonesome to me. My sisters were usually bent on staying dressed up all day Sunday, but not when Daddy was home. They always got dirty making mud pies in the patio, but when he was home, they both gladly changed into some play suit, bought since his last visit, strutted around like turkeys till he'd praised them long enough, and then settled down somewhere, not more than two inches from him.

Mama was in the kitchen telling Daddy about the good grades I was making in school. He declared that I was probably going to be one of the smartest little girls in the whole world, including my aunt, whom I thought must have surely been as close to knowing everything as possible — for a girl — naturally Daddies know more. But here was Daddy telling me I was even smarter and promising to raise my allowance. Of course Debbi had to come in with her reading book, but Daddy had been pleased and nobody could take that away.

Somewhere between the greens simmering and the sweet potatoes browning, Daddy had decided to take a nap. Mama had suggested the couch but of course we all got very sleepy too, so we climbed into the big bed in Mama's room. Lauren didn't much care to be squashed up under Daddy's arm so I put her in the crib and let her reach through the bars and curl her hand around Daddy's finger, while sucking noisily on a wrinkled thumb on her other hand. We made him sleep in the middle on his back and Debbi and I chose sides, each curling up like a fuzz ball, one on each side. Mama said she took a picture but when we had the film developed it didn't come out. She was disappointed because she had planned to send it to Daddy but Debbi and me didn't much care. We didn't need a picture to remember that Sunday.

I woke up cause Daddy was snoring so loud and nobody in the house snored like that. I reached over and shook Debbi and we decided it would be grand to snore just like Daddy. We heard Mama coming to wake us up for dinner, so we laid back down under Daddy's arms and proceeded to make so much noise with our snoring we woke him up before Mama got a chance. He knew that neither of us was asleep and started tickling us and chased us all the way to the bathroom. We washed our hands and I got Lauren out of the crib while Debbi and Daddy helped Mama put dinner on the table. We always ate in the dining room and used the prettiest table cloth and the good silver and Mama's wedding china when Daddy was home. Then we had to be extra careful not to break anything and make Daddy mad. It wouldn't do to let him leave mad at us. The only bad part was that we had to take some of everything and clean our plates besides.

Finally, we were all settled around the table. Lauren had to sit in the high chair but Debbi and I sat on the corners so Daddy could sit at the head of the table. Mama sat at the other end and watched us, smiling to herself.

Of course nobody could touch a dish before grace was said and it was Debbi's Sunday. We all closed our eyes, except Debbi and me kept one open looking at Daddy. Lauren just did like Mama said; she wasn't old enough yet, so when Mama told her to say "A-men" she did. Although it didn't sound much like "A-men" to me, Daddy thought it was perfect. I got to recite the poem I had made up in school and then we ate.

Dinner was lively and everybody was happy. Mama and Daddy never seemed to run out of things to talk about and the three of us slowed things up cause we kept interrupting to tell Daddy something. Even Lauren got in her say; she had started talking since the last time Daddy was home and figured she deserved equal time even if she did keep saying the same thing. Any other time Mama would have made us hush and quit butting in but today was different.

We finished eating and went on the front porch to watch the last of the Sunday sun. Usually the telephone started ringing; Mama's friends calling with the latest news, but nobody called on the Sunday evenings Daddy was home.

Finally he got up and he and Mama went into the front bedroom and closed the door. They always had some business to talk about. This was the signal for Debbi to get his bag from the back bedroom. I put Lauren in her stroller and Debbi watched her while I took the bag and packed all his things in it. I usually made a grand mess but he always said I did a fine job.

When they came out of the bedroom we proudly handed him the bag which he put in the trunk of the car. He kissed Mama and Debbi and Lauren and talked to her till she finally got out "Bye-bye Daddy," then whispered a secret to me. He always told me a secret before he left. Sometimes he forgot and told me an old one but mostly he made a new secret for me to keep and remember till he came back home again.

He backed out of the driveway and we all waved good-bye from the patio. Debbi started to cry and I told her if she stopped I'd share my secret with her. Even though it was an old secret it did the trick and she was satisfied. Mama had promised we could watch TV if we got ready for bed early so I gave the two little ones a bath while she cleaned up the dinner dishes.

Later when everybody was in bed and all the lights were out I could hear Mama on the phone telling someone that Daddy had already left. I started to cry and thought about the secret he had told me. I was too big to be crying, Debbi did all the crying in this house. I got up and went to the bathroom to wash my face. I decided that I was very sleepy, so I crawled back into bed and went to sleep thinking about what a grand day this Sunday had been.

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